

Quality Nursing Home Checklist

How to use this checklist

When you're trying to decide about the quality of nursing homes in your area, this checklist can be incredibly helpful. Most likely, an unexpected event has led to you needing to make decisions for a loved one while under a lot of stress and uncertainty. The person will be discharged from the hospital soon and you have to make some major decisions very quickly. This checklist will help you keep the facilities straight by being able to gather the information you need so your loved one ends up in the best possible facility.

If your loved one is being discharged to a nursing home, the hospital case manager will have already identified facilities with bed availability ("openings"). For those facilities:

- Print one copy of the checklist per facility you will visit.
- Do your "homework" online first and then arrange to visit these facilities.

In this checklist, the term "resident" is used to the person who will stay in the nursing home. While the stay may be only temporary or permanent, this term is used for both types of people.

Thank you for being an AgeWiseU member!

SOURCE: This checklist has been adapted from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) [Questions to Ask When You Visit a Nursing Home](#) and based on my own experience working in nursing homes for over 25 years. I've even helped my own Mom find a quality place for my grandmother, so these questions do need to be asked and answered before making any decision.

Name of the Nursing Home	
Address	
Website	
How Close to Your Home	
Administrators Name	
Director of Nursing's Name	
Name of Contact Person	
Phone Number	

Before Your Visit

External Quality and Safety Information	Answers	Notes
What is the nursing home's rating? STEP 1: Go to Medicare.gov/care-compare STEP 2: Select Nursing Homes including rehab services STEP 3: Enter your Zip Code (and/or the Name of the Facility) and hit Search STEP 4: You can change the filters by Distance, Overall Rating, or Other Ratings depending on what's most important to you STEP 5: Select the nursing home you will visit and identify the:		
- Overall Star Rating		
- Health Inspection Rating		
- Staffing		
- Quality Measures (Overall)		
- Number of Certified Beds		
- Participates in Medicare/ Medicaid		
- Ownership Type		
- Legal Business Name		
- With a resident and family council?		
- Located within a hospital?		
- Automatic sprinkler systems in all required areas?		
- In a Continuing Care Retirement Community?		

Also review:		
Health Inspections		
Staffing		
Quality Measures (Individual Measures)		
COVID-19 Vaccination Rates		
Fire Safety Inspections and Emergency Preparedness		
Penalties		

NOTE: You can enter up to 3 facilities and hit the “Compare” button to compare the facilities side-by-side. You can also “Save to Favorites” any facilities that you will visit to refer back to later.

During Your Visit

Date of Visit: _____

Quality Improvement	Answers	Notes
Does the nursing home’s inspection report show quality of care problems or other citations (failure to meet one or more state or federal requirements)? Note: The nursing home must make its most recent state or federal survey report available in a public place. It tells you how well the nursing home meets federal health and safety regulations. You can also find it, and older reports, at Medicare.gov/care-compare and on most state survey agency websites.		
Has the nursing home corrected all citations on its last state inspection report? Note: If there’s an issue at the nursing home that concerns you, ask what they’ve done or are doing to correct it.		
What is the nursing home doing to improve quality and staffing?		

Safety and Care	Answers	Notes
How will the facility inform me and my family about its emergency/disaster preparation and response plan?		
Can the resident still see my personal doctor? If needed, does the facility help arrange transportation for this purpose?		
What hospitals does the nursing home have arrangements with?		
Will the resident get preventive care to stay healthy? Are eye doctors, ear doctors, and podiatrists available, or does the facility help make arrangements for the resident to see specialists like these?		
How will the resident get access to oral care?		
How will the resident get access to mental health care?		
Are there resident policies I must follow? Will I get a written copy of these policies?		
Are there extra charges for other services, like beauty shop services?		
Will the nursing home tell me in writing about their services, charges, and fees before I move into the home? Note: Medicare- and/or Medicaid-certified nursing homes must tell you this information in writing. Get a copy of the fee schedule to find out which services are available, which are included in your monthly fee, and which services cost extra. Then, compare nursing home costs.		

Preventing/ Reporting of Abuse	Answers	Notes
Is the relationship between staff and residents warm, polite, and respectful?		
How does the nursing home check to make sure it doesn't hire staff members with a finding or history of abuse, neglect or mistreatment of residents in the state nurse aid registry?		
What are the nursing home's policies and procedures on prohibiting and reporting abuse and neglect?		

What training does the nursing home have in place to keep residents safe from abuse, neglect, mistreatment, or exploitation?		
How can people report concerns about resident safety and care?		
How does the facility respond to reported concerns?		
Has the nursing home been cited for issues related to abuse in the last year or two? Note: <i>Nursing homes cited for abuse will have the following icon next to their name on Medicare.gov.</i> 		

Nursing Home Appearance and Livability	Answers	Notes
Are the residents clean, well-groomed and dressed appropriately for the time of day or season?		
Does the nursing home smell good or have overwhelming, unpleasant odors?		
Does the nursing home appear clean and well kept?		
Is the temperature in the nursing home comfortable for residents?		
Does the nursing home have good lighting?		
Are the noise levels in the dining room and other common areas comfortable?		
Is the furniture sturdy, comfortable and attractive?		
Are exits clearly marked?		
Are there areas where family and friends can visit or gather for special occasions?		
Are all common areas, doorways, and resident rooms designed for wheelchairs and/or walkers?		
Are handrail and grab bars securely placed in hallways and bathroom?		

Which systems are connected to the nursing home's backup generator? (e.g. air conditioning, heating, lighting)		
Will the person have a private or semi-private room?		
How much furniture and personal belongings can the person bring?		
What type of personal storage space is available? (e.g., individual closet, individual drawers)		
Is there window in the resident's bedroom?		
Will the resident have a private bathroom or share with another resident?		
Where are baths and showers given?		
How is access to the internet, a computer, phone and television handled?		
Will the resident be able to choose their own roommate?		
What are the policies and procedures to protect the resident's personal belongings? (e.g., lockable cabinets and closets)		

Menus and Food	Answers	Notes
Will there be choices of food items at each meal?		
Can the nursing home accommodate individual dietary needs and preferences? (e.g., low-salt or no added sugar diets)		
Are nutritious snacks available?		
Can the staff help residents eat and drink during mealtimes, if needed?		
Are you allowed to bring food and drinks in from the outside?		
What type of storage options are available if you do? (e.g. can person have their own mini-frig in their room, is microwave available)		

Staff and Staffing	Answers	Notes
Are staff kind and courteous to residents and co-workers?		
What training and continuing education is given to staff?		
What does the nursing home do if they are short-staffed?		
How many Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) work on days and nights (7-3, 3-11, or 11-7 shifts)? How many CNAs work on the weekend for these shifts?		
Is there at least one Registered Nurse (RN) physically in the facility 24/7? If not, how often is a RN on duty?		
Do staff knock before entering resident rooms?		
Do they call residents by their preferred name?		
Is there a Social Worker on staff to assist with social service needs?		
Will staff call the resident's personal doctor or the medical director when they have a medical need?		
Does the staff speak the person's primary language? If not, is an interpreter available or another system in place to help the person communicate their needs?		
Will the same staff take care of the resident day to day, or will they change?		

Activities	Answers	Notes
How do residents, including those who are unable to leave their rooms, choose to take part in a variety of activities?		
Is there help for residents to plan or choose the activities that are available?		
Does the nursing home have outdoor areas for residents to use?		
Is staff available to help residents go outside if they want to?		

Does the nursing home have an active volunteer program?		
Can the resident decide what time to get up, go to sleep, or bathe?		
If the resident's visitors need to visit early or late, or the resident wants them to come early or late, how will they get in and out of the building when it locks at night?		
What procedure would be followed if the resident wanted to leave the nursing home for a few hours or days?		
How will the nursing home help the resident participate in social and recreational activities?		
How will the nursing home help support the residents religious or cultural needs?		
Does the nursing home offer transportation to activities in the nearby community?		

Dementia Care *If needed	Answers	Notes
What percentage of residents with a diagnosis of dementia are currently prescribed an antipsychotic medication?		
What's the nursing home's current rate of antipsychotic medication use?		
Does the nursing home participate in any efforts related to reducing antipsychotic medication use in nursing homes (like the National Partnership to Improve Dementia Care)?		
Does the nursing home have specific policies and procedures related to the care of residents with dementia?		
If so, does the policy include the use of non-medication based approaches to care as a first attempt to respond to behavioral symptoms (which are often a means of communication) for residents living with dementia?		
Have staff received additional training on dementia care?		
What are the staff-to-resident ratios for dementia care?		

Will I have easy access to a safe outdoor area, including if I'm in a locked unit?		
Does the nursing home offer activities at night when residents may be awake?		

Questions to ask current resident(s) and/or family members	Answers	Notes
What changes did the nursing home make to improve the quality of life for residents in the last year?		
What are the plans for future improvements?		
How has the nursing home responded to recommendations for improvement?		
Who does the group report to?		
How does membership in the group work?		
Who sets the agenda for meetings?		
How are decisions made (for example, by voting, consensus, or by an individual) ?		

You have the right to get Medicare information in an accessible format, like large print, braille, or audio. You also have the right to file a complaint if you feel you've been discriminated against. Visit [Medicare.gov/about-us/accessibility-nondiscrimination-notice](https://www.medicare.gov/about-us/accessibility-nondiscrimination-notice), or call 1-800-MEDICARE for more information.